

we are treating others the way we want to be treated. If that sounds familiar, it should because that is the Golden Rule, which is found in every major religion on this planet.

There are few people as well qualified to tackle this challenge as Brenda Mallory. I believe that she is the kind of experienced, dedicated public servant that we need to lead CEQ at this critical time, not just for the Agency but for our Nation.

Ms. Mallory is a deeply committed public servant with extensive experience under both Democratic and Republican administrations. No stranger to CEQ, Ms. Mallory served there for a number of years after an impressive tenure of more than a decade at EPA, including under President George W. Bush. She has earned respect from both sides of the aisle, and, as the former General Counsel for CEQ, she already knows the Agency inside and out.

Her experience and her reputation as a collaborative, pragmatic leader help to explain why she has garnered broad bipartisan support among environmental leaders who have served before her. Get this—13 past Republican CEQ and EPA appointees, including a former CEQ Chair, and 4 different Republican EPA Administrators have publicly praised Ms. Mallory and urged her confirmation. Now, that doesn't happen every day, as the Presiding Officer knows. But among those former Republican EPA Administrators who have urged her confirmation are these: Bill Reilly, Christine Todd Whitman, Michael Leavitt, Stephen Johnson, and James Connaughton.

Ms. Mallory has also earned the support of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. I will say that again. Ms. Mallory also earned the support of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—and a whole bushel of environmental groups across this land.

She has represented business interests in the past as an attorney in private practice, so she understands the importance of timely and well-coordinated environmental reviews, which are crucial for getting investments in telecommunications and in infrastructure off the ground.

Ms. Mallory's expertise will be critical to the task that lies ahead. In addition to restoring balance at CEQ and its mission, the next Chair at CEQ will address a number of pressing crises facing our Nation today. Let me mention some of them. They include the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and they include the worst economy since the Great Depression, as well as the enduring problem and challenge of racial injustice. All three—all three of these crises are compounded by a fourth, and that is the climate crisis.

We have no time to waste. We must tackle the climate crisis with conviction and with urgency. My home State of Delaware, which I am privileged to represent, certainly cannot wait any longer. We happen to be the lowest lying State in America. Our State is sinking, and the seas around us are rising.

This is felt by other States across the country too. Climate change is an issue that hits red States and blue States alike. Our colleagues JOHN NEELY KENNEDY and BILL CASSIDY, from Louisiana, tell me that Louisiana loses—get this—a football field of wetlands to rising sea levels every 100 minutes.

Let me mention that again. Louisiana loses a football field of wetlands to rising sea levels every 100 minutes. In another part of the country, the midwestern part of the country, last year, hurricane-force winds flattened over half—over half of the corn and soybean crop in Iowa, literally in the span of about a week, maybe even in a span of about a day.

Out on the west coast, wildfires raged across California as big as the size of Rhode Island, while floods in Florida damaged homes, and roads and deadly ice storms a month or two ago left millions in Texas stranded without power or water.

Natural disasters and extreme weather don't discriminate; they impact all of us. Brenda Mallory knows this. She understands the gravity of the situation and the immense challenge she has ahead of her, should she be confirmed. I know she is ready to seize the opportunity ahead of her in this role.

She also knows that the laws we write and decisions we make can affect who faces the brunt of the consequences. For too long, communities of color have disproportionately suffered from our environmental policies. From chemical contaminants in drinking water to toxic air pollution from our roads and our factories, our most marginalized citizens are too often exposed to environmental public health risks and left behind by our investments and policies.

We need to work to improve environmental outcomes for all Americans—all Americans. Brenda Mallory at the helm of CEQ can play the leadership role that is needed in addressing environmental justice and meeting the challenges of climate change in a way that will lift up all communities and achieve a brighter, more equitable future for each one of them.

As we address the crises we face, we have an opportunity to improve people's lives today and for future generations. To do that, we need principled, enlightened leaders. We need leaders who are humble, not haughty; leaders who have the heart of a servant and understand that their job is to serve, not be served; leaders who unite, not divide; leaders who build bridges, not walls.

I am confident that Brenda Mallory is just that kind of leader. She will bring integrity. She will bring honor and humility to her role just as she has done in her decades of service to this country. As Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, she will be a leader who brings people together to form lasting solutions to the challenges that we face today.

With that in mind, I strongly urge each of our colleagues to join me in

supporting her confirmation. I thank again those who voted for cloture a few minutes ago.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### FOR THE PEOPLE ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, it has been just over 2 months since we transferred majority rule to President Biden and the Democrats, and they have made it very clear that not even their most radical policy proposals are up for debate. They just want to push things through. In fact, based on what we have seen, I am willing to go on the record as saying that they see any possibility of defeat as an impermissible challenge to their hold on power, and they have got quite a long enemies' list.

You will recall that, back in 2016, after Donald Trump won the election, liberal activists blamed the electoral college for their many campaign failures.

In 2020, even as the count came down in their favor, the attacks continued. Faced with the possibility of constitutionalist, conservative judicial nominees, the Supreme Court also became a source of righteous panic. In the wake of the 2020 election, activists were quick to demand that their new majority break the structure of the Court and transform it into a rubberstamp for radical policies that don't stand a chance of surviving this Chamber under regular order.

Just this year, when faced with a much slimmer majority than, I am sure, they expected, many of my Democratic colleagues reversed their positions on the filibuster. Suddenly, the procedural backstop so many of them had once vowed to protect—this was an important check against the tyranny of the majority—was, all of a sudden, nothing more than a racist relic of Jim Crow America. So we are left to assume, I suppose, that tyranny started to look pretty good in the face of such a slim majority.

Yet the filibuster isn't the only Senate institution that came under fire. Debate over a Federal minimum wage increase grew so unhinged that many Democrats suggested firing the Parliamentarian and replacing her with someone who was willing to deploy his or her own rubberstamp. Just this week, news broke that Senate Democrats are now toying with the idea of firing the Director of the Congressional Budget Office. For what? For the unpardonable sin of doing his job.

If you don't like the score, fire the scorekeeper. If you don't like the standard, wipe it off the books. If you don't like the institution, just burn it to the ground.

It is a familiar curriculum now reflected in the Democrats' latest effort to demolish and rebuild the country in their own radical image. They call it the For the People Act, but the basic premise of S. 1 is that, in order to secure our elections, we have no choice

but to take electoral power away from the people and put it in the hands of politicians and bureaucrats. It is a top-down approach that, if implemented, would centralize control over elections in direct contravention to the Constitution, destroy barriers to voter fraud, and enable radical activists to harass and intimidate their political opponents. It is the sort of power grab you would expect a cartoon villain to conduct, but here we are, debating this in the U.S. Senate.

When you dive into the specifics, it really gets worse. Here are some things that it would do.

The bill would, indeed, ban voter ID requirements and force States to allow ballot harvesting schemes.

The Federal Election Commission, which for the moment is a balanced, bipartisan Agency, would morph into a partisan, prosecutorial body, ready to be weaponized against the political minority.

Instead of living or dying by the support of loyal donors, under this new scheme, political campaigns would receive public money payouts, which they could then use to promote whatever message they pleased no matter how objectionable it might be to the taxpayers, who would be funding those campaigns.

Speaking of those donors, if you have ever wondered who was behind a particular campaign, this bill has you covered. It includes new restrictions on political speech in the form of a donor disclosure mandate. Say goodbye to anonymous political activity in the tradition of the Federalist Papers and the civil rights movement. This is cancel culture on steroids, and if the Democrats have their way, this is what is coming to a precinct near you.

Of course, the centralization of power on this scale will require a laundry list of regulations, and on that front, S. 1 does not disappoint. The requirements shoved onto local and State officials are so burdensome and impractical that I refuse to believe anyone involved in the drafting has ever staffed a polling place. Certainly, they have never served as volunteers on a county election commission. That is something I had the honor of doing a couple of decades ago.

If they get their way, the same automatic registration procedures that failed voters in California and in Illinois are coming to a county elections office in your neighborhood.

Felons will regain their right to vote in Federal elections, but no one seems willing to explain how they expect State officials to prevent them from voting in down-ballot races.

Elections officials will have the pleasure of purchasing new paper-backed voting machines just as soon as those machines come into existence. That is right. This bill mandates the use of technology that hasn't hit the marketplace.

Speaking of theoretical technology, for some reason, the drafters of this

bill also thought it would be a good idea to force States to invent new technology to support automated voter registration by phone.

Elections are not easy events to stand up. County officials and volunteers work year-round to ensure that polling places are staffed and safe, that machines are functional, and that volunteers are well trained to recognize illegal electioneering and fraud. Over the years, State and local authorities have found their own solutions to these challenges. When those solutions fail, we have the ability to implement Federal backstops against voter suppression and election mishandling.

Everyone has his own role to play. These roles are outlined in the Constitution for a reason—because the Founders knew that any detached Federal bureaucracy would lack the competence to solve the unique logistical challenges my Democratic colleagues are trying to use as proof that Congress must step in to burn down yet another institution of our democracy. That is the constitutional imperative of the States to set the time, place, and manner of elections.

If we continue to go down this road, this partisan fever dream will become codified chaos that will trickle all the way down to the precinct level and irreparably erode confidence in the electoral process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

#### AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President and my colleagues, there is a saying about Afghanistan: that we have turned the corner toward victory so many times that we are spinning in circles.

During the beginning of my time in Congress, I went to Afghanistan to visit our troops and military leadership about every 2 years. Each time I went, I was met by a new, capable, impressive general who had just started his yearlong tour, who told me that the last general did it wrong and that, this time, everything was going to be different. I remember coming back from my third trip to Afghanistan—I think it was in 2011—convinced that it was time to leave. The primary mission had been accomplished. Within a few years of our invasion, al-Qaida in Afghanistan had been reduced to a shell of its former self, and we had really shifted to a new mission: nation-building. At the outset, there was reason for us to stay and engage in that mission and to work with the new Afghan Government to help get it on its own feet, but, by 2011, that mission had, for all intents and purposes, become a permanent one.

Now, after 20 years of war and handwringing about when the right time is to leave, we have to acknowledge some basic truths: Our military presence in Afghanistan is not creating the conditions necessary to eradicate the Taliban or the conditions necessary to create a fully functional Afghan military or government.

In fact, the facts on the ground would tell you the opposite is true: The longer we stay, the more powerful the Taliban becomes and the less willing the Afghan Government appears to be to make the hard choices to stand on its own.

We can pretend that another year is going to change this, but it won't. "Just a little bit more time" has become the rinse-and-repeat phrase of the Afghanistan hawks, but to stay any longer is really—let's be honest—a decision to stay forever, and that is something the American people do not support.

I want to tell you one story from my trip to Afghanistan in 2011 that helped to confirm my belief that something was very wrong about our policy there. I went with a bipartisan delegation. I was in the House at the time. We visited a far-off Province in western Afghanistan—a small town called Parmakan—and we were there to visit a group of Army commandos who toured us around this village. They were protecting the farmers in this village from Taliban attack. They attested to us that the attacks had largely stopped, and in the place of those attacks had matured a commerce between the Taliban forces that surrounded the village and the farmers of the village. As we walked around this village, we made our way through fields of these beautiful, beautiful, colorful flowers.

I turned to my colleague next to me, and I asked him if he had a sense as to what this crop was.

He said: I think I do, but let's confirm.

So we asked one of the village elders what they were harvesting in these fields.

Poppy, he told us.

Our U.S. military forces were protecting the poppy trade in this western Province of Afghanistan—in fact, protecting the ability of the Taliban to come in and purchase that poppy in order to fuel the insurgency that we were fighting. Our troops were literally being utilized to protect the revenue source of our enemy. And so no wonder our policy in Afghanistan appears circular. In many ways, it is and it has been for a very long time.

But even for those who disagree with me and contest that our presence there has actually helped facilitate the survival of the Taliban, what evidence is there that staying for another few years is going to make the key difference?

The American war in Afghanistan is nearly 20 years old. It is the longest war in U.S. history, outlasting the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean war combined.

The United States and other international donors have invested an extraordinary amount of money and effort and blood to help stand up a functioning Afghan Government and civil society. And yet that government has